



## MORAL COMPETITION AND THE THRILL OF THE SPECTACULAR: RECOUNTING CATASTROPHE IN COLONIAL BOMBAY

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**ABSTRACT** At 10:15 on the night of 31 May 1903, the D-block of the recently completed Sita Ram Building in Bombay suddenly came down with a crash. Most of the building was unoccupied, but on the ground floor was a saloon bar, which over the past months had done a brisk trade with British soldiers and sailors. The customers of this bar comprised most of the dead and injured when the building collapsed.

Since the bar stood across the road from the tomb of a Muslim saint, rumours spread that the disaster was the direct result of the insult to the holy man and implicitly of the transgression of Muslim space by the combined efforts of the Hindu bar-owner and his bibulous patrons. This short essay explores the moral tensions that found expression with the collapse of the Sita Ram Building through a comparison of its reportage in an English-language newspaper and an Urdu hagiography of the offended saint. At the same time, it draws attention to the neglected importance of colonial Bombay as a prime location of the early Muslim experience of globalising modernity.

**KEYWORDS:** *agency, Bombay, cosmopolitanism, communalism, globalisation, moral conflict, Muslims, saints, religious violence*

### **Bombay as Islamic Cosmopolis**

In spite of the attention that Bombay has received by way of the study of urban history, colonial economics and the sociology of communal tension, the importance of the city in nineteenth century Islam has been almost entirely ignored.<sup>1</sup> With the notable exception of the Bombay Ismā'ilis, scholarship has scarcely begun to register the tremendous variety of Muslim individuals and groups whose mercantile, intellectual, political and missionary agendas reshaped the cultural geography of the city between the 1840s and early 1900s.<sup>2</sup>

Bombay was uniquely qualified for the role of an Islamic cosmopolis. Its geographical position allowed it to inherit a series of older networks based on pilgrimage and commerce that connected India's western seaboard with East Africa and the Gulf, at the same time that the city's place in the new geography of empire created another series of networks that through rail and steamship connected Bombay to the whole interior of the subcontinent and to the British territories in eastern and southern Africa. From this position, Bombay acted as a magnet that attracted individuals and organisations from a catchment area that comprised not only the unified geography of British India and the empire in Africa, but also the informal empire of the Indian princely states (particularly Hyderabad) and the shaykhdoms and protected ports of the Gulf and the Horn of Africa (Green, 2007c). Through these countless capillaries of contact, Bombay attracted Muslim industrial workers from the small towns of the Konkan in their tens of thousand, alongside shiploads of Middle Eastern pilgrims whose journeys to the Hijaz now involved a stop-over in Bombay of days, months, or even years. For the Muslim aristocracy of land-locked Hyderabad, Bombay served as a window to the world and for Iranian political exiles (Muslim, Baha'i, Zoroastrian) it became a place of refuge. For Christian missionaries the city's demoralised workforce offered fertile ground for conversion (Smith, 1916), while Muslim missionaries used Bombay's trade networks to expand into the new imperial territories of East and South Africa (Green, 2007c, 2008). From a narrowly technological perspective, the principal engines which powered Bombay's economy of attraction were the steamship, the railway, the printing press and the cotton mill. If the pioneer industrialist Matthew Boulton had been describing Bombay rather than his Birmingham powerhouse, he may well have uttered the same words: 'I sell here, Sir, what all the world desires to have—Power' (Boswell, 1844, Vol. 6: 91). In myriad new ways, Bombay offered a whole range of Muslims—peasants and merchants, agitators and poets, preachers and seamen—access to social, epistemic and plainly mechanical power that they had previously never known. What this added up to was the creation of a religious economy, and the spirit of competition, which characterised it and pushed its Islam into new and distinctly modern trajectories.

Whatever forms of agency are imputed to it, by any measure of historical significance, Bombay was vital to the transformations in Islamic faith and practice which characterised the Victorian age in terms of the city's fecundity of books, ideas, organisations, lifestyles, art forms, tradecraft and morals. Its printing presses exported 'classic' and newly-written books in Persian, Arabic, Gujarati and Urdu; its mechanical advances offered visions of the future to Muslim travellers from all across the region.<sup>3</sup> Its disjointed social structure and spirit of enterprise created a jostling of new Muslim elites and proletarians; its sheer popularity summoned a diversity that allowed Muslims to alternatively rediscover their collective unity as Muslims or else learn instead that they were above all Indians. It is little wonder that through nurturing Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī and the Indian National Congress, Bombay can lay claim to the parentage

of both pan-Islamism and Indian nationalism (Ahmad, 1969; Johnson 1973; Keddie, 1972: 22–32). On the basis of such evidence Bombay can be considered the leading Muslim cosmopolis of the nineteenth century Indian Ocean.<sup>4</sup>

### From Diversity to Competition

Coeval with the great demographic expansion of Bombay in the second half of the nineteenth century—not least through the migration of Muslims from the Konkan who made up the main migrant labour force of colonial Bombay (Khalidi, 2000)—was an expansion of the city's 'sacred spaces', whether in terms of *masjids* and *mandirs* or the sites of community memory (shrines, graveyards, processional routes) whose foundation are a perennial part of the migration process (Catlin-Jairazbhoy and Alpers, 2004; Ebin, 1996; Green, 2003). Such religious sites were themselves controlled by different Muslim groups and communities. Bombay's main Jami' mosque, re-founded in 1802 and located in the heart of the city, was managed by a Konkani director (*nazir*) and a board of twelve other Konkani Muslims, for example, but the city also possessed Iranian and Mughal mosques and a significant number of shrines associated with Muslim saints (*awliyā*, *pīrs*) from distant regions (Anon, 1909, Vol. 1: 188–9, Vol. 3: 300–14; Edwards, 1902: 61–2). Since Bombay (and the villages which it swallowed) already possessed a number of minor pilgrimage sites based around the graves of such holy men, the influx of large numbers of Muslims to the city lent a special significance to these older sites as evidence of the city's 'original' Islamic roots. Most of these shrines dated to the last years of the eighteenth and the opening decades of the nineteenth century and it seems that, as in other colonial cities, increased movement meant new shrines were also founded.

Here, too, were traces of the cosmopolitan. In the north-east of the island was the shrine of Shaykh Misrī, who was said to have come to Bombay from Egypt around the fifteenth century; other shrines in the city were dedicated to similarly 'imported' saints. All of these shrines hosted annual celebrations of the death or 'wedding' (*urs*) of the saint buried there, and the *Bombay Gazetteer* for 1909 lists 10 such festivals worthy of notice, all of which dated from at least the first half of the nineteenth century. At the same time, Sufi shaykhs like Habīb 'Alī Shāh (d.1323/1906) established lodges for the dissemination of their intercessionary brand of Islam, while Muslim educational charities offered self-consciously modernist alternatives. Since this diversification of the religious economy occurred in conjunction with a novel missionary ethos giving religion itself a relational exchange value, Bombay's cosmopolitanism was shaped by an uneasy tension of competition and co-existence.

Of course, Bombay was not a primarily religious space and like other industrialising cities of the period it offered its workers more distractions than attractions to the religious life. Temperance movements aimed at Indian factory workers became a feature of various religious groups in the city (Talcherkar, 1919). As a counter to the

European-style bars and music halls that were attracting a growing Indian clientele, the shrines of the city's Muslim saints offered a more licit (because transparently indigenous) form of entertainment.<sup>5</sup> Among the saintly *'urs* celebrations of Bombay—at which the visitor might find 'stalls and booths of every description', kite-flyers and minstrels, 'merry go rounds and pleasure boats' (Anon, 1909, Vol. 1: 189)—the most important was undoubtedly that held each year at the shrine of Makhdūm Alī Parō (d. 1432) in Mahim, which the Birmingham missionary Reverend Henry Smith liked to visit to preach the Good News of Christ.<sup>6</sup> While the Mahim shrine was popular with Muslims and non-Muslims from all over the city, its great *'urs* also attracted large numbers of Konkani pilgrims, as well as smaller numbers of travellers from outside the city, including pilgrims from the Nizam's dominions to the east (Anon, 1909, Vol. 3: 301–04). Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, on an average year anything between 70,000 to 200,000 visitors might attend Makhdūm 'Alī's week-long *'urs*, enjoying not only the stalls but also the musical concerts and mechanical fairground which for many pilgrims formed the highlight of the festivities.

Like other public spaces in pluralistic settings, these shrines could alternatively encourage or discourage sentiments of the cosmopolitan: while the Mahim *'urs* attracted Bombayites of all backgrounds, as we see below, the shrine of another Muslim saint called Pēdrō Shāh, located near the Victoria Terminus railway station, became the focus for a struggle that pitted the social habits of English seamen against the mercantile interests of a Hindu businessman and the partisan mores of a dead Muslim saint. For as the city grew, so did the degree of moral competition between its various inhabitants, particularly when in public (but increasingly also in private) their spaces began to infringe on one another as they did in the case of religious processions (Masselos, 1991).

These cosmopolitan pressures of metropolitan life were difficult enough to contain at any point, but when the space that was encroached was considered sacred, then a sentimental explosion was all the more likely. While this tells us little that is new about the communal riots which have captured so much attention in Bombay since the late nineteenth century, what is interesting about the Pēdrō Shāh episode is that the result of this moral antagonism was not a riot, but an act of supernatural saintly wrath by which a Hindu-sponsored sailors' drinking den was reduced in an instant to a pile of dust and rubble. The remainder of this short article serves to recount the curious episode of the collapse of the Sita Ram Building in 1903, drawing on the alternative narratives by which the event was understood in a contemporary Anglo-Indian newspaper and what can only be described as a novel exercise in Urdu hagiographical reportage. If the collapse of the tower block itself brought a rupture in the physical fabric of the city, the stories that surrounded the event reveal the fault-lines in its social fabric. Bombay's cosmopolitanism was, after all, built on a new capitalist economy, and the uneven social status this gave to its various communities made it a cosmopolitanism built on shaky foundations.

### Cosmopolitan Pressures and Hot-Headed Saints

Given that Pēdrō Shāh (d.1215/1799 or 1245/1829) was popularly believed to have been a Portuguese sailor who converted to Islam, a *renegado* in the language of the eighteenth century, he was an ironic choice as defender of orthodox Muslim manners.<sup>7</sup> But when a popular saloon bar was founded in Bombay's newly built Sita Ram Building in 1903, whatever Pēdrō Shāh's earlier credentials, he was certainly a Muslim saint in the right place at the right time: his shrine was located on the Esplanade adjoining the railway line and the GPO and just adjacent to the Windsor Bar in question. Given the atmosphere of moral competition that we have described, it is worth examining the curious series of events which occurred in connection with the shrine and which shed strange light on the cosmopolitan pressures in Bombay which a decade earlier had led to the infamous Hindu-Muslim riots of August 1893 (Anon, 1893). Of particular interest is the manner in which the collapse of the Sita Ram Building was reported in a Muslim publication of the period. For the text in question—published in 1903 in Urdu under the combined English–Urdu title of *A Sketch of the Life of His Holiness Saint Syed Pedro Shah, and His Miraculous Deeds—Pēdrō Shāh Sāhib kī Karāmāt*—is one of the oddest biographies ever written of a Muslim saint. It is also one of the most revealing documents available on Muslim life in colonial Bombay (Munshi, 1321/1903). With its curious blend of journalism and hagiography, English and Urdu, in its hybrid form the *Sketch* was in itself evidence for a kind of literary cosmopolitanism, though as we see below, this did not prevent its author from using this novel genre as a vehicle to express distinctly anti-cosmopolitan sentiments.

The author, a Muslim bureaucrat called 'Abd al-Karīm Munshī, was not content to provide only an account of Pēdrō Shāh's destructive wrath. He also aimed to correct what he saw as grievous errors in the popular accounts of Pēdrō Shāh's life and to use his book to present a distinctly 'Islamic' history for Bombay at large. The text is particularly revealing for the attitudes it displays that a middle class Muslim possessed towards the different communities living cheek-by-jowl around him. The *Sketch* begins with a summary of the early history of Bombay, the etymology of its Portuguese (*Bonbā'i*), Muslim (*Bombā'i*) and Hindu (*Mumbā'i*) names, and the rise of British power under the Company and Empire. In similarly etymological method it then moves on to address the name of the saint, 'Pēdrō' (Munshi, 1321/1903: 2–4). It is here that the text begins to take its first contentious turn, vehemently arguing against the widespread oral tradition of Pēdrō Shāh as a Portuguese convert with a biographical counter-narrative portraying him as an Arab merchant from the Makran coastline who belonged to the Qādirī lineage of Sufis, came to Bombay on a trade mission and died there in 1215/1799 (Munshi, 1321/1903: 4–5).<sup>8</sup> The saint's unusual (and clearly Christian) name of Pēdrō (that is, the Hispanic Pedro) was explained away as a nickname given to him by the Portuguese Bombay out of respect, since they implicitly compared him to their own Saint Peter, or Pedro (Munshi, 1321/1903: 4). The *Sketch* then claimed that the real name of the saint called Pēdrō Shāh was in fact

Sayyid ‘Abdullāh Shāh Qādirī! Like the city itself, the saint needed an unambiguously Islamic ancestry. In an English appendix to the Urdu text that was printed on its back cover, the author also reprinted a letter he had sent to the editor of the *Advocate of India* newspaper, explicitly challenging the version of Pēdrō Shāh’s life given in the 1901 *Census Reports* which had described him as ‘a Portuguese convert, who on conversion to Islam obtained the honour of sacrosanctity’.<sup>9</sup> Since the account in the *Census Reports*, which also appeared in various editions of the *Bombay Gazetteer* and other nineteenth century publications, presumably drew on an oral tradition preserved among local Muslim informants, we should be cautious in automatically conferring authority on the more ‘Islamic’ picture painted in the *Sketch*, not least considering the banality of the ‘original’ name of ‘Abdullāh Shāh Qādirī offered in its place. Given that the margins of the history of precolonial European encounters with Islam are replete with such conversions—particularly among the sailors and merchants who had most to gain by such acts of re-affiliation—there is nothing inherently unlikely about the story of a Portuguese convert.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the ascription of an Arab (and particularly a *sayyid*) ancestry to Muslim saints was a longstanding part of the hagiographical and saint-making process in India, in which an Arab bloodline became virtually a prerequisite for any saint worth his salt. Genealogical obsessions here stood in the way of cosmopolitan boundary-crossing. Still, in the absence of further evidence we are unable to judge which of the two rival accounts best reflects historical fact, and so the biographical controversy surrounding Pēdrō Shāh is best seen as an illustration of the wider tensions over maintaining community boundaries in the cosmopolis. For the ‘official’—and probably also popular—account of Pēdrō Shāh’s life as a Portuguese sailor presented a possibility of self-transformation and fluid community boundaries which was seen as a threat by those (including the author of the *Sketch*) already alarmed by the threat to Bombay’s Muslims posed by Christian missionaries and the Āryā Samāj’s campaign of *shuddhī* or ‘reversion’ to Hinduism (Sikand, 1997). And so a Portuguese Pedro became an Arab ‘Abdullāh.

These communal or communitarian tensions found further expression in the most detailed narrative found in the *Sketch*, which was concerned with events of the year 1903 rather than with the more distant past of Pedro’s purported life. This narrative concerned the events surrounding the construction, and subsequent collapse, of a multi-storey building near Pēdrō Shāh’s shrine (Munshi, 1321/1903: 6–12). Completed in 1903, the Sita Ram Building was funded by the eponymous Hindu entrepreneur Sītā Rām and his Parsi business partner, Rustamjī Kā’ūsji; cosmopolitanism, then, in its capitalist guise. The problems began when a drinking establishment, the Windsor Bar, was established in the building’s D-block. Soon there were gatherings of people there day and night, including large numbers of drunken and noisy Europeans—particularly soldiers and sailors, the *Sketch*’s author noted—who in true British fashion seem to have become especially rowdy around closing time. Even when the caretaker of Pēdrō Shāh’s shrine lodged a complaint with the Police Superintendent, nothing was done to curb the raucous activities across the road. But if the police would not intervene,

then the saint would. Indeed, on the night of 31 May 1903, the whole D-block of Sita Ram Building suddenly collapsed.<sup>11</sup> While five people were crushed in the rubble, other patrons of the bar managed to escape and were taken injured to recover in hospital. According to the *Sketch*, the timing of the collapse was in fact a sign of God's mercy, for the many upper storeys of the building were empty at that hour and so the casualties were mercifully few in number. One of the fortunate few was Sītā Rām's Scottish manager, Mr. Charles Stewart, who dramatically recounted in the *Sketch* how he managed to dash out of the bar just in the nick of time.

Quite aside from the loss of life, between the two of them Sītā Rām and Rustamjī Kā'ūsijī lost almost 20,000 Rupees that they had invested in the building. To make matters worse, when Bombay's chief of police and the coroner arrived at the scene, the decision was taken to prosecute Sītā Rām, who was forced to procure a barrister and a team of assistants to arrange for a costly defence. Less than two months later, a fire at the Sita Ram Buildings led to even more destruction. Yet when the case was finally brought to court, it was dismissed by the judge and Sītā Rām was freed. According to the *Sketch*, having recognised his wrongdoings, the mercy of God and his saint had saved Sītā Rām, and so the Hindu then paid a visit to Pēdrō Shāh's shrine and organised a Quran recitation in gratitude. With this denouement of clear satisfaction to the offended Muslim protégés of Pēdrō Shāh, their complaints earlier by-passed by the colonial police, we see the brief resolution to the tensions that resounded through the Muslim communities of Bombay. Just as the efforts of scores of Muslim, Christian and Hindu moralists in Bombay were jeopardised by the worldly distractions offered by the city's new experiment in urban life, so was the pious respectability of Pēdrō Shāh's shrine threatened by the ungodly patrons of the Windsor Bar across the street. In the encroachment of their 'sacred' moral space by the combined efforts of boozy seamen and a Hindu entrepreneur, the Muslim devotees of Pēdrō Shāh were early victims of the ambiguously cosmopolitan pressures of modern urban life.<sup>12</sup>

### Alternative Readings

It is illuminating to compare this Urdu account of this curious episode with an alternative version recorded in Bombay newspaper reports from the time of the events. The Monday 1 June 1903 edition of the *Bombay Gazette* newspaper carried the story under the heading 'Fatal Collapse of a Building', with further details in a long article headed 'The Disaster at the Market' in the following day's edition. These reports closely confirm the *Sketch*'s account of the events *per se*, describing how 'at a quarter past 10 o'clock the entire portion of the building over the Refreshment Bar suddenly came down with a crash' (*Bombay Gazette*, 1 June 1903). Further information was given concerning the rescue efforts and the role of Bombay's fire brigade and a number of passers-by in it. Here it is the agency of the city's administrative infrastructure that is praised, that is, the modernity of the city itself rather than the 'traditional' agency



of the miraculous. Nonetheless, for all the efforts of the firemen and doctors, three European soldiers and one Parsi died.

The *Gazette's* follow-up article of 2 June 1903 contained much more detail, both on the events themselves and the background to the entire affair. It was also written in a more salacious and journalistic manner. Indeed, proud of its scoop, in ironically appropriate terms the runner for the *Gazette* article declared how it would 'reveal how miraculous were the escapes of some of those involved'.<sup>13</sup> Particularly tantalising was the news that the European firm of Messrs. Heggerie, Su'zer and Co. were due to move into offices on the first floor above the bar only a day after the building's collapse.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the report continued, since the bar usually 'did prosperous business', it was unusual that there were so few people there at the time of the disaster; only two hours beforehand more than twenty-five customers were present. Mr. Stewart, the bar manager who also appeared in the *Sketch*, was used to add further frisson to the story, for readers were told: 'His escape was miraculous. Hardly had he stepped onto the verandah when a roar announced the collapse of the whole block. Masonry clattered into the road from the front of the building like an avalanche' (*Bombay Gazette*, 2 June 1903). The manner of the newspaper reporting interestingly contains rhetorical parallels to the supernatural narrative of the *Sketch*, whose very subtitle evoked the miracles (*karāmāt*) that were central to its entire presentation of events. While it seems likely that the language of the miraculous in the *Gazette* was not used as literally and deliberately as in the Urdu text, their similarities point us towards the common origin of both documents in Bombay's popular cosmopolitan print culture (cf. Ghosh, 2004). With its links to the emergent Victorian genres of the horror story and Penny Dreadful, the newspaper appears less as the beacon of a rational public sphere than as a monger of supernatural gossip and metaphysical inconsistencies. In their appeal to a parallel and in some cases overlapping readership, the English *Gazette* and the Urdu *Sketch* belonged to a common field of popular print culture in which there was no strict border between hagiography and journalism. The hagiographical *Sketch* presented 'hard evidence' no less than the journalistic *Gazette* flirted with salacious tales of the miraculous. There was, then, a kind of cosmopolitan slippage between the languages, genres and even agency at work in the city's plural worlds of print.

This perspective is confirmed in a further section of the *Gazette's* 2 June article, in which the supernatural rumours on the streets surrounding the disaster were given full vent. Under the sub-heading 'The Wrath of a *Pir*', the article sought to capitalise as much as possible on the strange gossip that was by now circulating in Crawford Market and the bazaars adjoining the ruins of Sita Ram Building. It is worth finally quoting the section in full to capture the flavour of this specimen of journalistic exotica, which has much in common with Kipling's tales of the Indian uncanny such as *In the House of Suddhoo* and *Haunted Subalterns* (Kipling, 1888):

It appears that in the immediate vicinity of the Windsor Bar was the grave of a Mahomedan "Pir". For this tomb especially sanctity was claimed, and around it gather



every day numbers of Mahomedan devotees. When it first became known that so close to the site a liquor bar was to be established there was an outcry amongst the Mahomedan community and a petition was submitted against it. This, however, was without avail, and in the view of those especially interested in the Pir's tomb, an act of sacrilege has been committed. This accident is explained by the native mind as the direct act of God, the immediate outcome of the wrath of the Pir. Others connected with the building explain it in another way. They complain that for a long time past they have been beset with ill luck, and this is the culmination of their misfortune (*Bombay Gazette*, 2 June 1903).

### Conclusions: Modernity and the Semantic Economy

For all their documentary coherence, there were still important differences between the English and Urdu accounts of the 'disaster at the market'. Not least of these differences came by way of their attribution of agency—and so of heroism, praise and status—for the rescue of those whose lives were spared. For while it was happy to trade in tantalising tales of miracles, the *Gazette* was less willing to overlook the more mundane agency of those involved in the rescue operation. It was also only from the *Gazette* that readers could learn something of those who had actually died at the bar. Not only were these in fact the rum-swilling English soldiers and sailors of the *Sketch*, but also Indians from across the mosaic of Bombay life. One such Indian victim was Rustomjee Ichhaporia, whose brother (testifying at the official inquest) worked as the shop steward or 'muccadam' (*muqadam*) at one of the city's textile mills. Another was a young Muslim called 'Mahomed Oomer', a twenty-seven year old hawker of cutlery, who we may assume was plying his trade when disaster struck. If the moral vision of the *Sketch* was clear and simple, real life in the cosmopolis was clearly more complicated.

With their symbolism of violence, hubris and divine retribution, there is an eerie familiarity to the counter-narratives and conspiracies that surrounded the collapse of the Sita Ram Building and the demise in its ruins of the immoralists and capitalists. The combination of symbols on which both the Urdu and English accounts fed hints at a new (and now all-too-familiar) modernity: The high-rise building as a totem to be celebrated or despised; the oblivion to the resentment caused by unrivalled financial success; the spectacular 'punishment' of the moral offender. Alternatively perpetuating and feeding on these fertile symbols were the print media of newspaper and chapbook for which the events and their aftermath provided an unmissable opportunity to not only sell copy but also to capitalise, in different ways, on the rich semantic yields of catastrophe. For whether in championing the city's firemen or its angered saints, both the accounts have their distinct heroes whose loyalties represent very different visions of order and authority in the miniature world of the Bombay cosmopolis. In terms of the historical trajectory of Muslim religious violence, what is most interesting about the Sita Ram affair is of course its surrender of agency to otherworldly movers: this was not the 'this-worldly Islam' often associated with Indian modernity (Robinson, 2004). The religion of the *Sketch* had yet to be affected by the activist ideologies of

moral revolution born as the Asian siblings of the Russian revolution. But the world, as ever, is intransigent to the sense which is made of it and for all the moral high ground claimed in the *Sketch* there lay a fatal flaw in its theological reading of the collapse of the Sita Ram Building and the estranged morality of the spectacular that fed on it. This crack in ‘Abd al-Karīm Munshī’s narrative was the demise of the young hawker Mahomed Oomer, overlooked in the Munshī’s otherwise detailed story. For even taking into account the wrath of the Muslim saint, this was a death of which no moral sense could be made.

In a city that produced some of the most significant examples of ‘positive’ Muslim cosmopolitanism—from open-minded Persian travelogues to educational societies and eventually the Bollywood *ghazal*—what we have seen is the perhaps inevitable shadow to such achievements. The same social circumstances that produce the positive social equity of the cosmopolitan are no less productive of what we have termed cosmopolitan pressures—the competition for moral space that accompanies the growth of densely pluralistic environments. In drawing attention to the darker or converse cosmopolitanism displayed in the Sita Ram episode, this article is intended as a small contribution to the understanding of cosmopolitanism as a process and not only as a virtue.

## Notes

1. Recent studies in Bombay sociology and history include Dossal (1991) and Patel and Thorner (1995).
2. For interesting exceptions, see Kidambi (2007), Masselos (1991) and Siddiqi (2001).
3. See the account of Bombay written in the 1880s by the Iranian traveller Hājji Pīrẓāda (d.1321/1904), who paid great attention to the city’s factories, zoo, piped water, trams, and the mercantile innovation of the ‘office’ (*āfis*). For details see Pīrẓāda (1342–43/1963–65), Vol. 1: 120–42.
4. On Muslim maritime cosmopolitanism elsewhere in this period, see Alpers (1983), Bazin (1997), Larguèche (2001), Ostle (2002) and Tarazi Fawaz (1983).
5. On Hindustani music performances, their links to prostitution and missionary perceptions of them in nineteenth century Bombay, see Pradhan (2004).
6. See the account in H.J. Smith ‘Mahim Fair’. In *Bombay Muhammadan Mission News* (15 February 1902). Copy kept in file Z1, Urdu Mission Records, Bombay 1900–03, referred to in Lane-Smith (1901–38).
7. On the *renegado* in British history, see Matar (1998; 1999).
8. On comparable counter-narratives elsewhere in India, see Green (2007a). On Sufi merchants in the nineteenth century Indian Ocean, see Bang (2003).
9. Munshi (1321/1903), back cover (in English), citing *Census Reports* (1901) Vol. 10, part 4: 108.
10. Pēdrō Shāh thus reflects Pīr Badar who appears in Sayyid Sultan’s sixteenth century Bengali *Nabī Vamsha*. Perhaps originally a Portuguese sailor or Muslim soldier, in narrative tradition Pīr Badar married a Hindu princess by impersonating Krishna before fathering a son who

- went on to preach alongside Jesus. (Thanks to Luke Clossey for this). On British maritime *renegados* and other early modern European converts to Islam, see Matar (1998; 1999).
11. On other acts of supernatural defence of Muslims from British mores and institutions in the early 1900s, see Green (2007b).
  12. On communal rivalry for urban space as expressed in festivals and riots in early twentieth century Bombay, see Masselos (1991).
  13. 'The Disaster at the Market'. *Bombay Gazette*, 2 June 1903. Further particulars, including details of the beginning of the legal inquiry, were also carried in *Bombay Gazette*, 3 June 1903.
  14. I have been unable to find details on this company in such reference works as Carter (2002).

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